

## **The Dance of Commonwealth Relations: Press Photographs, Diplomatic Practices and the Lusaka Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting 1979**

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The 1979 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Lusaka, Zambia was important in the formation of contemporary Southern Africa, in constructing the contemporary role of the Commonwealth and in defining Britain's place within the organisation. The conference is remembered for producing a strong declaration on racism and the approval of a deal that led to Zimbabwean independence in 1980, as well as for tension between new British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and other Commonwealth leaders.

Drawing on recent work in the fields of critical geopolitics and historical geography (Dodds, 2010; Lester, 2005), the paper focuses on narratives about the CHOGM constructed in the Zambian and British press and on the diplomatic and journalistic practices that contributed to the production of these narratives. These are examined through a focus on one particular press image, a photograph of Margaret Thatcher dancing with Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda at the conference. The discussion of the construction, circulation, publication, and recollection of this image highlights how such representations defined the Commonwealth and its relevance to Britain, Zambia and the post-colonial world.

The paper asserts the relevance of the Commonwealth to understandings of decolonisation, the politics of race and contemporary North-South relations, as well as revising theoretical debates about the construction and circulation of geopolitical narratives through text, image, staging and storytelling practices.